Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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Aftermath Diary

Wars on Many Fronts

There are several different battles on going in the wake of September 11. So far as US foreign policy is concerned we have the faction led by Secretary of State Colin Powell, which recognizes that if the US is indeed in a state of war it had better firm the loyalty of important allies in the Islamic world by stressing America's commitment to a settlement of Palestinian grievances. Hence President George Bush's sudden announcement on October 2 of his hopes for a Palestinian state.

Then there is the hawkish faction personified by Paul Wolfowitz, deputy secretary of defense, which demands a military retaliation with a target list extending far beyond Afghanistan. But as the Joint Chiefs warn Bush of the immense difficulties awaiting any prolonged onslaught on the Taliban, British prime minister Tony Blair, echoing Margaret Thatcher's stiffening of George H. W. Bush's wavering resolve to attack Iraq a decade ago, urges the destruction of the Taliban.

On the home front, there is, predictably, greater unity of purpose in an onslaught on the US constitution. We have seen the creation of an Office of Homeland Security, putting the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies more overtly back in the business of domestic spying. We have Attorney General John Ashcroft proposing an outlandish assault on freedoms with his call for Star Chamber proscriptions, electronic eavesdropping, open-ended detention without charges for immigrants; dumping of the statute of limitations on certain crimes; enhanced forfeiture laws where property of a suspect can be seized prior to trial or conviction.

Congress balked at Ashcroft's draft bill, and so the Administration floated a whole series of alarms on impending terror assaults via chemical and biological weapons, hazardous waste trucks, attacks on nuclear power plants and so forth. After a few days of this, Rep John Conyers announced that he had teamed up with Republican James Sensenbrenner on the House Judiciary Committee to okay a bill giving Ashcroft everything he wanted. Conyers' sop to the ACLU: a "sunset" provision stipulating that unless the Congress votes otherwise, the new laws will go off the books in two years. Anyone who has ever read the history of sedition laws will recall how many times that promise has been made and then flouted. The temporary very easily becomes the eternal.

To the credit of hundreds of organizers across the country, there have been strong antiwar demonstrations, tuning in with a widespread feeling among ordinary people that the way to requite the memory of those people who perished on September 11 is not to drop bombs on Afghan peasants and city dwellers.

Cheney Wanted to Quit; Ridge Slated as New Veep

Before the September 11 attacks, vice president Dick Cheney was set to quit. President George Bush was preparing to nominate Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge as Cheney's successor.

A prominent Philadelphia businessman and close friend of Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge has been telling friends that in late summer Cheney went to Bush and told the president that his health was so precarious that he would soon be forced to quit the vice presidential post. Bush had thereupon called the Pennsylvania governor and told him that when Cheney stepped down he wanted to nominate Ridge to the US Senate for confirmation as the new vice president.

With a medical history of four heart at-

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tacks since 1978, and a bypass in 1988, Cheney's condition has been a subject of concern ever since Bush put him forward as his vice presidential nominee at the Republican convention in Philadelphia in July, 2000. Cheney's health once again hit the headlines in January of this year when he was forced into surgery for an angioplasty amid the stresses the Florida recount at the start of this year. Cheney had another "mild" heart attack in March.

It's no surprise that Bush called Ridge. Before he himself became the nominee Cheney had been supervising the search for Bush's running mate and put Ridge at the top of the list. But Ridge is pro-choice and the fury of the Republican right forced Bush to abandon the plan. Even so, in recent months there's been widespread speculation that Cheney would stand down in 2004, with Ridge as his designated successor. When Cheney was in the hospital for surgery after his last heart attack, Ridge was summoned to Camp David, where he appeared at a press conference standing behind Bush.

Cheney's decision to quit lends another level of drama to the morning of September 11, when a vice president with a weakening heart was running the country while the President was heading for the SAC deep shelters in Nebraska.

On September 12, amid widespread public dismay at Bush's disappearing act on a day of dreadful national crisis, the White House concocted the story, later reiterated by Cheney, that there had been a "credible threat" of a plan to attack Air Force One, thus justifying Bush's zig-zag, belated return to Washington. The White House told New York Times columnist William Safire that after the onslaughts of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon a terrorist phone call "using code words" had said Air Force One was a target. Safire leaped to the astounding conclusion that there was a bin Laden model in the White House. Two weeks later, on September 25, CBS News reported that there had been no such phone call.

In a Meet the Press interview with ABC's Tim Russert on September 16 Cheney laid great stress on succession as having been very much on his mind in those frantic morning hours of September 11. Four days later Bush told the joint session of Congress he was nominating Tom Ridge as head of the new Office of Homeland Security, thus setting Ridge on the national stage.

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CIA Killing Bids: They Never Stopped

We keep hearing about President Gerald Ford's presidential order of February, 1976, forbidding assassination as a tool of US foreign policy-makers. Since September 11 there's been a spate of demands that the directive be rescinded so the CIA can fight on a level playing field. It's all hokum of course. The US government never got out of the killing game. We asked Bill Blum, who has chronicled US terror, to provide a list of US government attempts since Feb '76 to murder foreign leaders. He gave us this list.

1976 - Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica; 1980-1986 - Moammar Qaddafi, leader of Libya, several plots and attempts upon his life; 1982 - Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of Iran; 1983 - Gen. Ahmed Dlimi, Moroccan Army commander; 1983 - Miguel d'Escoto, Foreign Minister of Nicaragua; 1984 - The nine comandantes of the Sandinista National Directorate; 1985 - Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, Lebanese Shiite leader (he lived, 80 others died); 1991 - Saddam Hussein, leader of Iraq; 1998 - Osama bin Laden; 1999 - Slobodan Milosevic, President of Yugoslavia.

Not So Great Giuliani

Rarely has a politician enjoyed a more instantaneous reversal of fortune.

While Bush was hunkered down in his Omaha bunker, Mayor Giuliani scheduled press conferences almost hourly from Ground Zero. He looked in charge, confident and, somewhat shockingly, even humane. Even Gov. George Pataki, his arch-rival among the New York Republicans, seemed to defer to Giuliani. Soon the city's liberal pundits were praising Giuliani's cool-under-fire demeanor. Eric Alterman, columnist for The Nation, was so overcome by Rudy's performance that he urged his fellow Democrat's to launch a campaign to "draft Rudy" to run for president on their party's ticket in 2004.

How quickly they forget. This is the same Giuliani who had turned Manhattan into a kind of police state, where the cops shot first and offered excuses later, where even the most staid forms of political protest were violently suppressed and where relatively innocuous forms of art came under attack from the office of the bluenose mayor. Amid all the encomia, it was left to columnist Jimmy Breslin to set things straight. Decidedly unswayed by the new Rudy, Breslin referred to Giuliani as "a little man in search of a balcony".

While other liberals were pleading with the mayor to cancel the impending mayoral elections and guide the city through its crisis, Breslin warned that this would feed all of Giuliani's worst authoritarian ambitions. "He searches for ways to change laws so he can be mayor again", Breslin wrote. "He has tried to sabotage this election with rumors and even advising people that they did not have to vote… When the cheering stops and the bright adoring eyes looking at him turn back to daily life, Giuliani's real legacy will be a city school system of over a million, non-white mostly, that is in a disgraceful shambles, and it has been for every day of his time as mayor."

A close look at Giuliani's performance under attack reveals that his administration of the crisis has been much less effective than advertised and that many of his actions have been taken to benefit his own standing and his business pals in the financial district, often at the expense of the more than 30,000 people displaced by the disaster. The political machinations began almost immediately. According to City Council member Marquerita Lopez, Giuliani didn't include any local elected officials from lower Manhattan when he established the Crisis Control Center for the area. In fact, in the week following the attack, the council members were refused entry into the Control Center set up to handle logistical problems associ-

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ated with the collapse of the Twin Towers.

According to Simone Sindin, a member of the Manhattan community board, the mayor's performance bordered on the incompetent when it came to dealing with the poor, the sick, the elderly and the displaced. CounterPunch has a report written on September 21 by Sindin intended for the other members of the community board. Sindin reports that the mayor barred food deliveries in the blast area for several days and that numerous AIDS patients were left without food for at least two days because Meals on Wheels was not permitted to deliver food. She writes that nursing care was not provided to homebound sick people and that a recent liver transplant patient had no care for two days. Sindin estimates that there were nearly 15,000 "marooned people" in lower Manhattan lacking basic services.

While Giuliani rushed to get the big board at Wall Street ready by the Monday following the attack, little was done for lower Manhattan's residents and small businesses. "Small business people are at a loss", writes Sindin. "They are unable to continue business downtown and need new space in northern Manhattan to continue to function. September 19 was the first day the downtown community received normal food deliveries. The rescue workers had mountains of food available to them, which of course was unnecessary. However, other existing residents had the same needs and were really not represented. 30,000 people have no homes. Insurance companies cover only two weeks of hotel living and costs."

Despite Giuliani's talk of unity and tolerance, Sindin reports that there have been numerous attacks on Muslims in Manhattan and that the New York police department has been largely unresponsive. More than a week after the attack the department's deputy chief for community affairs still had not even met with Arab groups in the city despite repeated requests from Muslim leaders and City council member Christine Quinn.

Although the streets and buildings of lower Manhattan were coated in a toxic dust, the Department of Environmental Protection was slow to begin testing and when they finally started the teams only looked for the presence of lead and asbestos, even though dozens of other toxins, including dioxin, were most certainly dispersed over dozens of city blocks. Sindin said some of the testing teams were sponsored by asbestos companies.

"Ultimately, residents are going to be allowed to return to homes covered in dust without knowing what kind of pollutants are present," says Sindin. "Hopefully, thirty years from now today's crib dwellers won't be subject to cancerous problems caused by air borne pollutants."

CROP POISONINGS HALTED; 1000S SAVED!

Bio-terror became the media frenzy of the week, a scenario pushed by attorney general John Ashcroft in an attempt to scare up support for his Anti-Terrorism Act, a wholesale assault on the bill of rights that would go beyond even the strictures enacted by Clinton in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing.

People have been told to stock up on gas masks, which may be difficult to purchase since many metropolitan areas made them contraband in the wake of the Seattle WTO protests. Others have rushed to get inoculated against anthrax, despite the association between this vaccine and certain strains of Gulf War syndrome.

Tommy Thompson, secretary of Health and Human Services, told CNN that he was confident that in a worst case scenario, where 100 million people were doused with the lethal toxins, they would be able to save at least 15 million. In gliding over the prospect of 85 million dead, Thompson sounded like Edward Teller, or one of the other wizards of Armageddon, boasting about survivability ratios after all-out nuclear warfare.

But biological and chemical weapons don't really pose much of a threat to the United States, except to those people who have the misfortune to live near one of the arsenals that store the Army's disintegrating stockpiles of sarin and VX gas. Even if a terrorist outfit was able to brew up a batch of anthrax bio-toxin or sarin gas, turning it into a weapon of mass destruction is a challenge of an entirely different order. An useful story in the Wall Street Journal illustrated the enormous technical problems associated with deploying these weapons. Indeed, the only real attempt to use sarin gas as a terror weapon was a clumsy attempt in a Tokyo subway station by the Aum cult of Japan, which left eleven dead and hundreds ill. Compare this with the US Army's vile record of experimentation with bio and chemical weapons on unsuspecting US citizens, a legacy that stretches back to World War II and continues to this day.

Of course, chemical warfare is a daily fact of life in much of rural America. US agriculture is the most chemically-dependent in the world, relying on the fumigation of fields and vineyards, aerial spraying, and other applications of toxic cocktails cooked up by Monsanto and DuPont. A recent study by Cornell University estimates that 30,000 deaths a year in the United States are associated with exposure to chemicals. Indeed, the weeklong ban on crop-dusting almost certainly prolonged lives and was one of the few reasons for joy in a bleak month.

Instead of worrying about bin Laden, it might be better to shun the ChemLawn man and slam the door on the man from Orkin the next time he comes knocking.

THE PRICE, MRS. ALBRIGHT?

What moved those kamikaze Muslims to embark, so many months ago, on the training that they knew would culminate in their deaths as well as of those (they must have hoped) of thousands upon thousands of innocent people. Was it the Koran plus a tape from Osama bin Laden? The dream of a world in which all men wear untrimmed beards and women have to stay at home or go outside only when enveloped in blue tents? We doubt it. If we had to cite what steeled their resolve the list would surely include the exchange on CBS in 1996 between Madeleine Albright, then US ambassador to the United Nations and Lesley Stahl. Albright was maintaining that sanctions had yielded important concessions from Saddam Hussein.

Stahl: "We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more

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children than died in Hiroshima. And you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it."

They read that exchange in the Middle East. It was infamous all over the Arab world. We'll bet the September 11 kamikazes knew it well enough, just as they could tell you the crimes wrought against the Palestinians . So would it be unfair today to take Madeleine Albright down to the ruins of the Trade Towers, remind her of that exchange, and point out that the price turned out also to include that awful mortuary. Was that price worth it too, Mrs. Albright?

Mere nit-picking among the ruins and the dust of the 6,500? We don't think so. America has led a charmed life amid its wars on people. The wars mostly didn't come home and the press made as sure as it could that folks including the ordinary workers in the Trade Towers weren't really up to speed on what was been wrought in Freedom's name. In Freedom's name America made sure that any possibility of secular democratic reform in the Middle East was shut off. Mount a coup against Mossadegh in the mid-1950s, as the CIA did, and you end up with the Ayatollah Khomeini 25 years later. Mount a coup against Kassim in Iraq, as the CIA did, and you get the Agency's man, Saddam Hussein.

What about Afghanistan? Three years ago CounterPunch's editors wrote Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs and the Press. One chapter in it was titled Making Afghanistan Safe for Opium. We told in detail the story of how, under the auspices of the CIA, Afghanistan became the world's major supplier of opium and heroin.

In April of 1978 an indigenous populist coup overthrew the government of Mohammed Daoud, who had formed an alliance with the man the US had installed in Iran, Reza Pahlevi, aka the Shah. The new Afghan government was led by Noor Mohammed Taraki, and the Taraki administration embarked, albeit with a good deal of urban intellectual arrogance on land reform, hence an attack on the opium-growing feudal estates. Taraki went to the UN where he managed to raise loans for crop substitution for the poppy fields.

Taraki also tried to bear down on opium production in the border areas held by fundamentalists, since the latter were using opium revenues to finance attacks on Afghanistan's central government, which they regarded as an unwholesome incarnation of modernity that allowed women to go to school and outlawed arranged marriages and the bride price.

At that time the mujahiddeen was not only getting money from the CIA but from Libya's Moammar Qaddaffi who sent them $250,000. In the summer of 1979 the US State Department produced a memo making it clear how the US government saw the stakes, no matter how modern minded Taraki might be or how feudal the muj. The memo was dispatched to US embassies around the world, including the one in Teheran. A few months later the embassy was occupied by Iranian students and the occupants taken hostage. The diplomats and CIA residents shredded their secret files but the students laboriously reassembled them, and ultimately they were published in 68 paperback volumes. Among the documents was the State Department memo, written shortly after the Taraki coup. An excerpt:

"The United States' larger interest… would be served by the demise of the Taraki-Amin regime, despite whatever set backs this might mean for future social and economic reforms in Afghanistan. The overthrow of the DRA [Democratic Republic of Afghanistan] would show the rest of the world, particularly the Third World, that the Soviets' view of the socialist course of history being inevitable is not accurate."

Taraki was killed by Afghan army officers in September 1979. Hafizullah Amin, educated in the US, took over and began meeting regularly with US embassy officials at a time when the US was arming Islamic rebels in Pakistan. Fearing a fundamentalist, US-backed regime in Afghanistan, the Soviets invaded in force in December, 1979.

The back-office staffs, messenger boys, cleaners, and other workers throughout the Trade Center didn't know that history. There's a lot of other relevant history they probably didn't know but which those men on the attack planes did. How could those people in the Towers have known, when US political and journalistic culture is a conspiracy to perpetuate their ignorance? Those people on the Towers were innocent portions of the price that Albright insisted, in just one of its applications, to be worth it. It would honor their memory to insist that in future our press offers a better accounting of how America's wars for Freedom are fought and what the actual price might include.

CounterPunchers wanting a Whiteout can get it from us at the great price of $15, handling and shipping included. Write, enclosing a check, to Becky Grant, business manager, CounterPunch, PO Box 228, Petrolia, Ca 95558, or phone us at 1-800-840-3683 to buy it with a credit card.

EFFICIENT?

CounterPuncher Pierre Sprey takes exception to descriptions of the terrorists' attacks as of horrible efficiency. It was, he points out, scarcely demonstrative of good discipline to go boozing the night before, nor to tell a planeload of people they were about to die (thus virtually asking for resistance), as opposed to offering reassuring talk about merely flying to a different destination. Nor was it evidence of sound planning that the pilot of the plane that crashed into the Pentagon apparently couldn't locate the White House. Aerial surveys of the area would have been plentiful. And why tempt suspicion by paying for first class tickets with cash?

Contrary to much speculation, the terrorists would have had no way of knowing in advance that the impact of the plaques would cause both buildings to implode. The rapid collapse stemmed not so much from architectural miscalculation as the original requirements of the developers. Having decreed a height of 110 stories, the requirement of lightness led to the "stressed skin" mode of construction, which turned out to be so fatal.

Biological and chemical weapons don't really pose much of a threat to the United States, except to those people who have the misfortune to live near one of the arsenals that store the Army's disintegrating stockpiles of sarin and VX gas.

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TOO LONG A SACRIFICE?

Longwood (VA) College students waiting in line to give blood in response to the crisis were angered when the Red Cross no longer had facilities to accept them. One irate student said, "We were going to get extra credit for this."

ESCAPE FROM BEL AIR: BIN LADEN KIN FLEE

Within minutes of the attacks on 9/11, the relatives of suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden who were, until then, living very comfortably in the United States began scrambling for quick passage back to Saudi Arabia. Like many idle billionaires, many of the bin Ladens had bunkered down in Babylon West, aka Beverly Hills and Bel Air. They swiftly realized that even in this chic environment things could get dicey for relatives of the Lion of Kandahar.

But how to get out of Dodge? All flights out of LAX were cancelled for nearly a week. And even then a trip on a commercial jetliner seemed like a dicey proposition. Initially, the feds demanded that the bin Laden men remain in the country until their relations with Osama had been scrutinized. So the plan was to get the women back to Riyadh before the internment camps could set up or the Ashcroft Counter-Terrorism bill passed, which would make any past association with Osama bin Laden a federal crime. In the end, they turned to a company that specializes in flying rock bands on tour, including Neil Young and Bruce Springsteen. Apparently not all of the bin Laden brood shares the prudish Osama's violently anti-rock & roll sentiments.

Ironically, the Gulfstream III jet whisked the bin Laden women from LAX to Boston's Logan airport, the launching pad for two of the killer jets. On the flight to Logan, the women took a particular liking to one of the younger members of the rescue crew and prevailed upon him to accompany them back to Riyadh on board a private 767 jet. No word on whether he has been permitted to return to Los Angeles.

RIDGE'S VIETNAM: SAME AS KERREY'S?

The new director of the Office of Homeland Security, Tom "T-Bone" Ridge, has been widely hailed as a hero of the Vietnam War. But there's something screwy about Ridge's Bronze Star.

Ridge was drafted in 1968 while he was in his second year as a student at Dickinson University School of Law. He eschewed officer training school because it would have entailed an extra year of service. Ridge arrived in Vietnam in November 1969, where he served Bravo Company, First Battalion, 20th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. Ridge was quickly promoted to staff sergeant by a captain named Boyd Harris, who later nominated Ridge for a Bronze Star. Members of Ridge's battalion have suggested that Harris, a West Point man with political ambitions, made his promotions based on class status and education.

"I became a buck sergeant with my own squad in the first platoon," a man who served under Ridge in Vietnam wrote to a veterans' webpage last year when Ridge was under consideration as a vice-presidential candidate. "The last several months I participated in the Pacification program along the Red Ball. My squad then consisted of four other US soldiers and up to ten ARVN. What a waste. I was not impressed with Ridge either. He was the leader of my squad before I became a sergeant. The pathetic SOB would have caused all of us to get killed if we hadn't taken care of him. I was glad when he no longer led us."

"The pathetic SOB would have caused all of us to get killed if we hadn't taken care of him. I was glad when he no longer led us." Member of Tom Ridge's unit in Vietnam.

Ridge was stationed in a coastal village in South Vietnam where his company was involved in what his office delicately refers to as the Army's "pacification" campaign. Pacification was the CIA's reader-friendly word for its extermination of civilian opposition to the US war machine in South Vietnam also known as the Phoenix Program. It routinely involved sweeping through hamlets to make mass arrests, brutal interrogations, and the destruction of villages, napalming of rice fields and widespread assassination.

Like Bob Kerrey, Ridge won his Bronze Star for an operation that seems to have been little more than outright murder by ambush which was almost immediately sanitized as an act of heroism. Ridge's own account has made the operation seem like a firefight between US troops and NVA regulars. But in fact it appears that on March 30, 1970 Ridge and his squad sneaked up on a group of Vietnamese who were having lunch under a tree near the hamlet of Vinh Lac 4 and opened fire on them. According to the incident report, one 25-30 year old man wearing "a blue uniform" was killed. They recovered a rifle, a grenade, US Army ammo pouch and "15 bushels of potatoes and a small amount of rice." The report says the lethal shots were fired from the unlikely distance of "500 meters."

Ridge was later credited with firing the shot that killed the young man, an action that led Harris to belatedly put him up for the Bronze Star. "I'm not 100 percent sure who fired the shot,'' said Ridge. "I have a pretty good idea. I think it was (me).''

But Ridge's radio man doesn't think that Ridge was the triggerman. In fact, he doesn't even remember finding a body. "I don't remember T. Ridge getting a KIA," the radio man wrote to a website maintained by veterans of Ridge's battalion. "I could be wrong and wouldn't want to swear to it because it was 30 years ago. I do not remember finding any bodies that day. 500 meters is a long distance."

Several things undermine the contention that these were NVA regulars. But the text of the citation also gives away the true nature of the ambush. "Sgt. Ridge moved forward and began placing accurate bursts of rifle fire on the insurgents, eliminating one and forcing the remainder of the hostile elements to take evasive action," his medal citation says.

Insurgents is the term the CIA and the Pentagon applied to the NLF and South Vietnamese civilians. The choice of the word "eliminating", as a euphemism for killing, is also a giveaway. "'Eliminating' is pure Phoenix-speak," says Doug Valentine, author of The Phoenix Program, the definitive work on the CIA's operations in Vietnam.

Now we have the prospect that a veteran of the CIA run counter-terror program in Vietnam, which left upwards of 40,000 dead civilians, is in charge of the US's domestic version of the same.

GORE WOULD BE BOMBING BY NOW

Bob Shrum, the portly speechwriter for top-rank Democrats, at a recent dinner party in New York offered the bracing observation that Bush was too soft on the

*(**Diary** continued on page 8)*

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A CounterPunch Journey to the West Bank

The Aftermath From Ramallah

BY LORI A. ALLEN

What strikes me as I sit here in my house in the West Bank, the sound of tanks firing in the not so distant distance, the newscaster recounting the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces today, is how many similarities now exist between Palestine and the U.S. The unlikeliest of bedfellows, perhaps, but the parallels are clear. We are all asking who was responsible for September 11, and we are all fearing the long-term consequences.

Articles being written these days in the US are full of grief and wondering. But it is no longer just the angry questions about who could commit such dastardly crimes that are being spat out, nor just the urgent pleading about what can be done to stop them from striking innocent civilians again. Now, having traveled the short emotional distance from the initial shock and uncomprehending horror to uneasy contemplation, people are asking the more existential questions: issues of fate, happenstance, heroism and chance are tentatively being broached. The individual stories of the ordinary people who lost their lives in extraordinary circumstances are slowly being recounted. The happy stories of those who managed to flee the burning buildings, lead their coworkers to safety, or simply had the day off, offer a brief respite from all the tragedy, a moment of relief from the heavy cloud of mourning and fear that has taken the place of the yellow smoke hanging where the twin towers used to stand.

Perhaps there is some survivor guilt in the tales being told of all the hundreds of undistinguished, undeserving people who lost their lives in one of the craziest days of our country's history. Why him and not me? I was traveling that day, why her flight and not mine? The small, affecting details of their regular lives—this man was the father of four children, that woman a new employee, this firefighter just built a skating rink in his back yard for his son—now take on significance, and let us feel something tangible, helping us to absorb what has happened, even if it is so bitter. The now poignant minutiae of their mundane lives slowly come together to paint just a part of the picture.

People are waking up to what it means for thousands to lose their lives, what life will mean for the multitudes that have been injured or traumatized in some way. For one thing, it means that everyone in the States was affected. People across the country have some connection to someone who was in New York, whether it be a colleague, a cousin of a friend, whomever. Six degrees of separation create a full circle encompassing the whole nation, creating a bond of solidarity borne of sadness and feelings of shared vulnerability. Everyone is scared, for themselves, their loved ones; new alliances are being built out of concern for our collective existence. Many are even uniting in an effort to save the innocent civilians in foreign lands who will die in a war against an undefined enemy. All these networks of care, fear and dread are pulling us together.

Just as they have pulled Palestinians together. The numbers of killed and injured are certainly different—approaching 700 in Palestine since the beginning of this uprising, a number that seems small compared to the estimates of 6,500 in the U.S. (If one looks at these numbers proportionate to total population, however, 700 Palestinians killed would be comparable to 60,000 Americans.) And the circumstances of all those deaths vary: for the past year Palestinians have been dying from live bullets, rubber bullets, tank shelling, and helicopter missiles firing, whereas thousands of Americans (and others) were wiped out in a single day, under immense piles of rubble. The perpetrators also have distinct motivations. Israel is killing Palestinians and destroying their infrastructure as part of a decades-long military occupation and colonial movement on Palestinian land. On the other hand, despite the fact that investigations into the attacks at the WTC and Pentagon have barely begun, even though no suspects have been tried in a court of law (has everyone forgotten about the guarantees of democracy?), most think they know its causes. Aside from those who would dismiss the perpetrators as blood-thirsty fanatics, refusing to ask what logic might suggest, others familiar with the Middle East understand that the attacks were likely motivated by a combination of protest against U.S. policy in the region, linked to a religious conviction that defines fighting against injustice as just. This U.S. policy has instigated and maintained a siege on Iraq killing more than half a million children; it has provided political support and military weaponry to the Israeli government to use in trying to crush Palestinian resistance to occupation; this policy has propped up corrupt Arab leaders in a variety of "moderate" Arab states, leaving those populations no political options for resisting oppressive regimes.

A local newspaper dedicated its back page to a photo of a Palestinian boy carrying roses at a memorial for American victims; the accompanying text reads: "Terror is our common enemy."

So, certainly, there are important differences in the two situations. But on a simple, human level, in Palestine and the U.S., the aftermath (and ongoing-math as the body counts continue to rise) of extreme violence, is surprisingly consonant. When neighbors die, people gather together to mourn. When a group of people are threatened by a common enemy, they unite to defend themselves against it. When buildings, lives, and futures seem to be crumbling everywhere around you, you grasp on to what can prop you up—solidarity with the people suffering that

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The stock-traders and secretaries and everyone else in the WTC and on those planes were random, innocent civilians, just as the vast majority (86 percent) of Palestinians killed in the last year have been innocent civilians.

same harsh fate with you.

Everyone in Palestine has been affected by the intifada. When the beautiful house newly built by my friend's brother was torn apart by tank shelling, the roof ablaze and bullets continuing to shatter windows, neighbors swarmed to help, carrying buckets of water until the fire trucks arrived. When teenagers are getting shot during demonstrations against Israeli military occupation, other Palestinian teenagers are there wearing their first-aid volunteer vests, crouched at the sidelines ready to retrieve the injured. When a children's rights organization implemented a project for treating children traumatized by the nightly shelling in their neighborhoods, hundreds of people volunteered to paint faces, twist balloons, hand out crayons, and offer comfort. Like the benevolence that swept over New York in the wake of the disaster, people hugging strangers and donating blood, here too, a society under siege generates ways to channel the spirit of altruism. Ordinary people become minor heroes in basic ways.

And people in Palestine see the similarities. A local newspaper dedicated its back page to a photo of a Palestinian boy carrying roses at a solidarity memorial for American victims; the accompanying text reads: "Terror is our common enemy." Many in the west might not recognize the Israeli violence against Palestinians as being terror. But if you live in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, you know it is terror. The family of the 40-year-old woman walking home with her groceries, shot dead on the sidewalk by a tank shell fired from the Israeli settlement not a mile away, they know what terror is. The mother of an 8-year-old boy killed as he was standing on his bed watching his father paint his room, a bullet fired from that same Israeli settlement, she knows what terror is. As it was defined in the report issued by the Mitchell Commission, a delegation headed by the former U.S. Senator, intended to facilitate a Palestinian-Israeli cease fire, "Terrorism involves the deliberate killing and injuring of randomly selected noncombatants for political ends. " And now, people in the U.S. know what terror is. The stock-traders and secretaries and everyone else in the WTC and on those planes were random, innocent civilians, just as the vast majority (86.1%) of Palestinians killed in the last year have been innocent civilians.

When news of the tragedy was announced, Palestinians immediately felt the same horror and sorrow that was felt everywhere else. Although the CNN image of Palestinian children dancing in the streets celebrating the U.S. disaster has circulated throughout Europe and the U.S., instantly, and some would say intentionally, setting back the Palestinian cause at least twenty years, that image was in no way representative. Most Palestinians say the same thing: "Even though we are suffering because of the American government's relationship with Israel, even though American policy has to change, we can not support what has happened in the U.S. It is awful and immoral; Islam can not be a basis for this. We know what it's like to helplessly watch innocent civilians fall victim, and no human being with a conscience can rejoice in that." Because of that footage, unrepresentative, irresponsibly disseminated, Palestinians were made to feel they had to defend their basic humanity.

But it is just that, their basic humanity, that needs to be recognized. Many here have suggested that maybe now people in the U.S. will understand the Palestinians' plight and sympathize, maybe even be motivated to band together with them in shared suffering. Would that this human urge to unite through pain could cross over oceans, cultures, religions.

War is imminent, and few of us know what the breadth and depth of it might be. For the populations living in Afghanistan, maybe Lebanon, and beyond, the effects will be disastrous. Citizens of the U.S. must now recognize that, when their government use military might to fight a political and humanitarian problem, the cycle of violence will only speed up, and they are sure to be swept up in it, unwitting victims once again.

Lamp posts and store-fronts in New York are being covered with missing persons posters, smiling faces looking out at passers-by asking them to give their grieving relatives closure. When I read about this sad, even macabre, new aspect of the city's landscape, I was struck by another similarity between the U.S. and Palestine. For the last year, an ever-changing wallpaper of martyr posters has covered public surfaces across the West Bank and Gaza. Photos of the faces, sometimes smiling, usually somber, of every Palestinian killed look out at passersby, announcing their deaths, pleading that they not have been in vain. If, as a result of this tragedy and the questions about why it happened, Americans wake up to the damage their government is doing in the Middle East and elsewhere, if they come to realize that their tax dollars are being used to murder children and promote the subjection of people in countries far away, then maybe all those deaths, American and otherwise, can motivate people to prevent more. **CP**

Lori Allen is an anthropology graduate student at the University of Chicago, currently conducting research in the West Bank.

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(**Diary** continued from page 5)

Arabs. He said that if Gore had been ensconced in the White House, the Mossad would be writing the target list and that we'd all be better off with Lebanon, Syria and Iraq pounded into smoldering ruins.

But Shrum apparently doesn't hold out much hope for Gore in 2004. He has already defected to the camp of North Carolina's soon-to-be senior senator, John Edwards, the telegenic trial lawyer, who has became the latest Southerner to be embraced as presidential material by northern liberals.

God's Role

God heard the embattled nations sing and shout,
Gott strafe England, God save the King,
God this, God that and God the other thing,
My God, said God, I've got my work cut out.

So ran a satirical First World War rhyme about the Almighty's loyalties. Nothing changes much. "I find myself thinking in mystical terms of President Bush's speech to Congress and the country, and I know from conversations with many people that I am not alone. It seemed to me a God-touched moment and a God-touched speech." Yes, this was Peggy Noonan, author of the impending "When Character Was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan". More sick-making than most registrars of the divine presence, the former White House speech writer declares that September 11 has been a big come back for the Almighty: "God is back. He's bursting out all over. It's a beautiful thing to see."

It's a question of timing. At what exact time on Sep 11 did God manifest himself? Before, during or after? Of course, Noonan thinks After. Maybe she should turn to St Luke's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 1-5, in which Jesus Christ addresses the issue of a tower collapse in Siloam, in southeast Jerusalem. In a bout of tough rhetoric Christ has been preaching disunity ("Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division; For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three…" Then he addresses individual or collective guilt and sinful humanity: "Of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

As usual, the catastrophe drew forth excited commentary from numerologists and fans of Nostrodamus. "This attack was surrounded by occult symbolism," one numbers man wrote. "1. New York was the 11th state to endorse the Constitution. 2. New York City is exactly 11 letters. 3. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Pentagon took place on September 11, 1941."

As for Nostrodamus, let CounterPunchers remember that the alchemist's most enduring contribution was not vague prophecies, but his work in a field not unrelated to alchemy, namely cooking. In the mid-sixteenth century, the dawn of classical French cuisine, Nostrodamus published Confiturier français, the first complete work on jam-making.

A man of Provence, Nostrodamus assured the reader that he had personal knowledge of the jam-making secrets of Toulouse, Bordeaux and La Rochelle. "In short, of the whole country...from the Dauphiné to the Lyonnais." Thus he was able to describe "the most sovereign recipes" and teach the reader how to "preserve little lemons and oranges whole, make quince marmalade, pine-nut cake, sponge sugar, syrups, preserved pears, Spanish turron, marzipan tart, and jelly, both costly and difficult to make." Even for an alchemist who probably found predictions of the distant future a far easier assignment. CP

While Giuliani rushed to get the big board at Wall Street ready to by the Monday following the attack, little was done for lower Manhattan's residents and small businesses.

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Was the Price Worth It, Mrs. Albright?

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